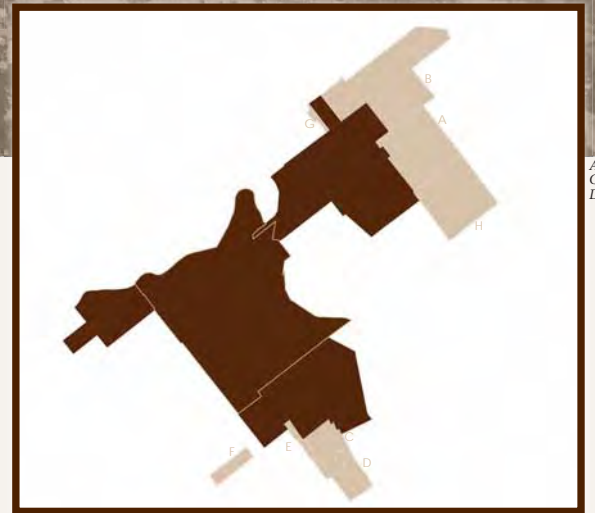


A walk through time... 1976-1985

Expansion Now Seems Unstoppable. To cope with increased traffic, Courtenay now needs a second crossing of the Courtenay River at 17th Street and street realignments near the 5th Street bridge. The construction of the Driftwood Mall at the south end of Cliffe Avenue expands commercial development in that direction, all contributing to the changing face of the city.



Aerial of Courtenay | Dave Mellin Photo

Population: 8,992 (in 1981)

Map: Dark brown areas represent the City boundary as it was in 1975. Lighter shaded areas show areas that were added to the City between 1976 and 1985.

A CARING COMMUNITY



Kwamis Village. The first phase was built in 1961 with additions added over time. It continues to provide low cost housing for senior citizens.



Lillian Lefcoe Centre | As shown in "Land of Plenty" by Senor, McInnis, Stephens and Watson.

During this time, several programs were established providing much needed assistance to many in our community. In 1976 the Lefcoe Centre opened on 3rd Street, to provide adult training programs for the physically and mentally challenged persons in the Comox Valley. It was named for Lillian Lefcoe, who had already donated years of service to helping those in need of assistance.

Seven years later, in 1983, the Food Bank opened downtown to fill another urgent community need. Several changes of address later, the Comox Valley Food Bank continues to help those in need from its present location on McPhee Avenue.

Help was also extended to people in need beyond our shores, when Faith Lutheran and St. George's United Churches became the first churches in Canada to sponsor Vietnamese people arriving as immigrants to Canada. Space was made in the Faith Lutheran basement to hold "English as a second language" classes for the benefit of new Canadians.

These programs along with many others have grown and changed over the years, but their legacy of care and community service continues to serve Comox Valley residents, old timers and newcomers alike.

CHANGING COMMERCIAL LANDSCAPE

Courtenay changed dramatically starting in 1975 when construction began on the Driftwood Mall south of town and later with the construction of the 17th Street bridge. This led to a progression of businesses locating along Cliffe Avenue to the south. The Westerly Hotel was built in 1979 and twin theatres opened next door at the corner of 17th St. and Cliffe Ave. Safeway was rebuilt on 8th Street. In 1979 the first Macdonald's Restaurant opened at 1175 Cliffe Avenue. The Co-op Creamery which had been purchased by Dairyland Milk Products moved from its 6th Street location into a new plant on 28th Street.

Downtown also changed during this time. Following the closure of Eaton's Department Store in 1981, a consortium of businessmen developed the building into the Courtenay Centre Mall. The corner of Cliffe Ave. and 5th St. also saw change with Highways demolishing the CIBC building to make way for traffic improvements and the renaming of the Civic Theatre to the Sid Williams Theatre in 1984.

GLACIER VIEW LODGE - LONG TERM CARE

The roots of Glacier View Lodge (GVL) go back to 1946 when the Women's Institute of North Vancouver Island passed a resolution that a home for senior citizens be established somewhere on the north end of the island, preferably the Comox Valley. Along with a cash donation from the Womens Institute (from War Bonds), and the efforts of countless numbers of volunteers, the first GVL was opened in the 1950's housing 28 elderly valley pioneers. Due to the age and deteriorating condition of the original building and new Provincial Government funding, the GVL Society, a not for profit, was formed in 1979 and a new 75 bed Intermediate Care facility was opened in 1982 replacing the old facility. On October 18, 1991 a 27 Bed Multi-level Special Care Addition was opened, providing a total of 102 Residential Care beds for local seniors.

Also, in this decade, the existing Laurel Lodge a privately owned Intermediate Care facility in the Orchard, added several new rooms and upgraded the kitchen and dining room, providing 27 additional beds.



Glacier View Lodge | Courtesy of Glacier View Lodge Society



BC Summer Games Headquarters | Contributed by L. Burns



1978 Snow Day at the Slough. More than 4ft of snow fell in 2 days. | Free Press Collection, Courtenay & District Museum

17TH STREET BRIDGE & BYPASS

With the growth of the Upper Island and Comox Peninsula, the highway traffic became increasingly busy. In addition to local traffic, all north and eastbound traffic travelled through 5th & Cliffe Ave intersection and over the 5th St. bridge. It became a hazard and headache. Various studies and ideas were implemented, including the most bizarre known as the "Banana", a concrete monstrosity, painted yellow to channel traffic safely and quickly - Wrong! During all these discussions and trials, it became evident the only solution was construction of a second crossing of the Courtenay River. Several options were discussed and the 17th St crossing emerged as the most logical. This decision prompted much opposition and the "battle lines" were drawn. The strongest opposition was due to the use of agricultural land for transportation purposes. Finally, after much procrastination, presentation, threats, name calling, and compromise, the Provincial Government moved ahead with the design and construction of what we now call the 17th Bridge and Bypass Highway, connecting to the "old island highway" at Headquarters Rd. The bridge is a bascule design allowing it to be opened at agreed times, to permit boat traffic to travel north on the river to the Slough. This solution to the Highway traffic problems of the time was completed just prior to the B.C. Summer Games in August 1981.



The much discussed "banana" traffic control mechanism | Free Press Collection, Courtenay & District Museum

FATHER TUNNER

In 1982 Father Tunner celebrated 60 years of Ordination and was given the title Monsignor. John Tunner had arrived in December 1945 to temporarily serve Canadian Martyrs Church on Harmston Avenue. Though he had at first been reluctant to come he stayed for 40 years. Since his birthday was Valentine's Day, the Catholic Women's League organized an annual party which became a fund raiser, "The Smorgasbord", which for many years was an important event in the social calendar for all Courtenay residents.



Downtown Beautification Project, c 1980 | City of Courtenay

